

Source of the Words Read Round the World

One month after the release of *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson, already conscious of the far-reaching influence of the book, sent a letter to Olga Huckins. She referred to a New York Times article that featured an interview with Olga and Stuart Huckins about their role in encouraging Carson to write the book. Carson noted in her correspondence: "I am happy to have this account of the origins of *Silent Spring* told...because you deserve the credit...for having brought back to my attention this problem." Further, she went on to emphasize that it was in fact foremost Olga Huckins' "personal letter to [her] that started it all."

This commentary from Carson shows how strongly she felt convinced by one woman from Duxbury. The first paragraph of the acknowledgments in *Silent Spring* state: "In a letter written in January 1958, Olga Owens Huckins told me of her own bitter experience of a small world made lifeless, and so brought my attention sharply back to a problem with which I had long been concerned. I then realized I must write this book."

Ultimately, *Silent Spring* led to the banning of DDT in the US and creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. The book's appearance on the national stage was part and parcel of the social change of the 1960s and a centerpiece of environmentalism—ignited right here in our town of Duxbury!

Stewarding the Place that Spurred *Silent Spring*

In 2012, on Rachel Carson's birthday, May 27, Judi organized a Town Holiday on this property to honor these two women and celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Silent Spring*. This event, which was free and open to the public, can be viewed on the Sustainable Duxbury website. Among the festivities of the day was a nature walk with Concord, Massachusetts, Naturalist- Author Peter Alden, who pointed out an osprey flying overhead. Once victims of DDT, which caused their eggs to become thin, they have made a remarkable recovery.

Honoring the local roots of *Silent Spring* is a labor of love for Judi and Terry Vose, who are now stewards as well as owners—as were the Huckinses. "We want to keep this parcel that inspired Rachel Carson as natural as possible," says Judi.

That was the incentive to place a conservation restriction (CR) on the property, an accomplishment signed, sealed, delivered this year with the guidance of Pat Loring. UMass Amherst's publication *Your Land, Your Legacy* defines a conservation restriction as "a legal agreement that extinguishes some of all of the development rights of the land forever, but allows other rights such as farming forestry, and recreation to continue, all the while maintaining your ownership...." Every conservation restriction is tailored to the specific purposes of the property. The Voses' conservation restriction, number 35 for Duxbury, protects the flora and fauna and at the same time allows for wildlife habitat improvement.

The iconic book *Silent Spring* has influenced the world for the better thanks to Rachel Carson.

Furthermore, if not for one woman's fierce love for her backyard birds on Powder Point, the book would never have been written. But we must remember too that if not for Judi Vose, the historically and ecologically significant sanctuary would not be the wild place still abounding with birdlife that it is today. To safeguard the property, the Voses will encourage abutters to also be stewards of the sanctuary by ecologically managing their own adjacent land.

The Town's Youngest Conservationists

To continue our town's longtime commitment to conservation and to instill an environmental ethic in our youngest citizens, the Duxburrow Outdoor Learning Area is being established under the direction of Duxbury Public Schools Science Director Cheryl Lewis, behind our new school building. Carson believed in nurturing the sense of wonder that children have when they encounter the natural world. "The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe," she wrote, "the less taste we shall have for destruction."

This new outdoor learning area will be a gathering place for students working on projects such as water testing, vernal pool monitoring, estuary and ecosystem studies, climate change lab work, and a butterfly garden. There are already wood duck boxes and an osprey nest pole out by the marsh. When they are naming elements of this learning space Judi Vose hopes that the name Olga Owens Huckins will appear prominently to show how just one person's actions can help to preserve the planet and change the course of history. "We want to inspire each child to be that 'one person' to help," says Judi.



Judy and Terry Vose on the Huckins property.